



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council

**FROM:** Katie Coyne, Environmental Officer;  
Assistant Director, Watershed Protection Department

**DATE:** February 10, 2022

**SUBJECT:** Update on discharge of diluted acidic industrial process wastewater to tributary of Harris Branch Creek

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The purpose of this memorandum is to provide you with updates since our initial report to you, dated January 27, 2022, regarding the discharge of diluted acidic (low pH) industrial process wastewater to receiving waterways from the Samsung Austin Semiconductor facility in northeast Austin, at 12100 Samsung Boulevard, located in City Council District 1.

On Thursday, February 3, 2022, Samsung and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) contacted the City of Austin to report the following events. Samsung confirmed important details of the report in writing to us on February 8, 2022. Over a four-day period between January 31 and February 3, 2022, the Samsung site received a total of approximately seven inches of rain from two separate rain events. An estimated 13 million gallons of stormwater filled the wet pond where industrial wastewater was contained, undergoing treatment, and being pumped away for proper disposal. The significant inflow of stormwater caused the pond to overflow to a secondary pond area on Samsung's property (as designed for the site's normal stormwater treatment).

On January 31, 2022, approximately 2.2 million gallons of stormwater mixed with partially treated wastewater discharged via a stormwater outfall to an unnamed tributary north of the facility. According to values reported by Samsung, this discharge was within regulatory limits set by applicable water quality rules. Samsung later disclosed that a second discharge occurred on February 3, 2022, this time a volume of approximately 5.9 million gallons, and with a slight exceedance of sulfates above regulatory limits set in City of Austin Code, but below State of Texas surface water quality limits within the downstream segment. Samsung reported the releases were necessary to avoid catastrophic impacts to the structural integrity of the stormwater pond berm.

The recent discharges follow a different drainage path than the initial incident in our previous memorandum (area map attached). Discharges to the receiving tributary (which begins immediately below the Samsung pond system) travel approximately one mile before entering the main stem of Harris Branch Creek. Outside of rain events, under normal conditions, the tributary typically holds intermittent pools and does not flow. The Watershed Protection Department

assessed the north tributary on February 6, 2022, to collect physiochemical data and biological observations and found no environmental impacts.

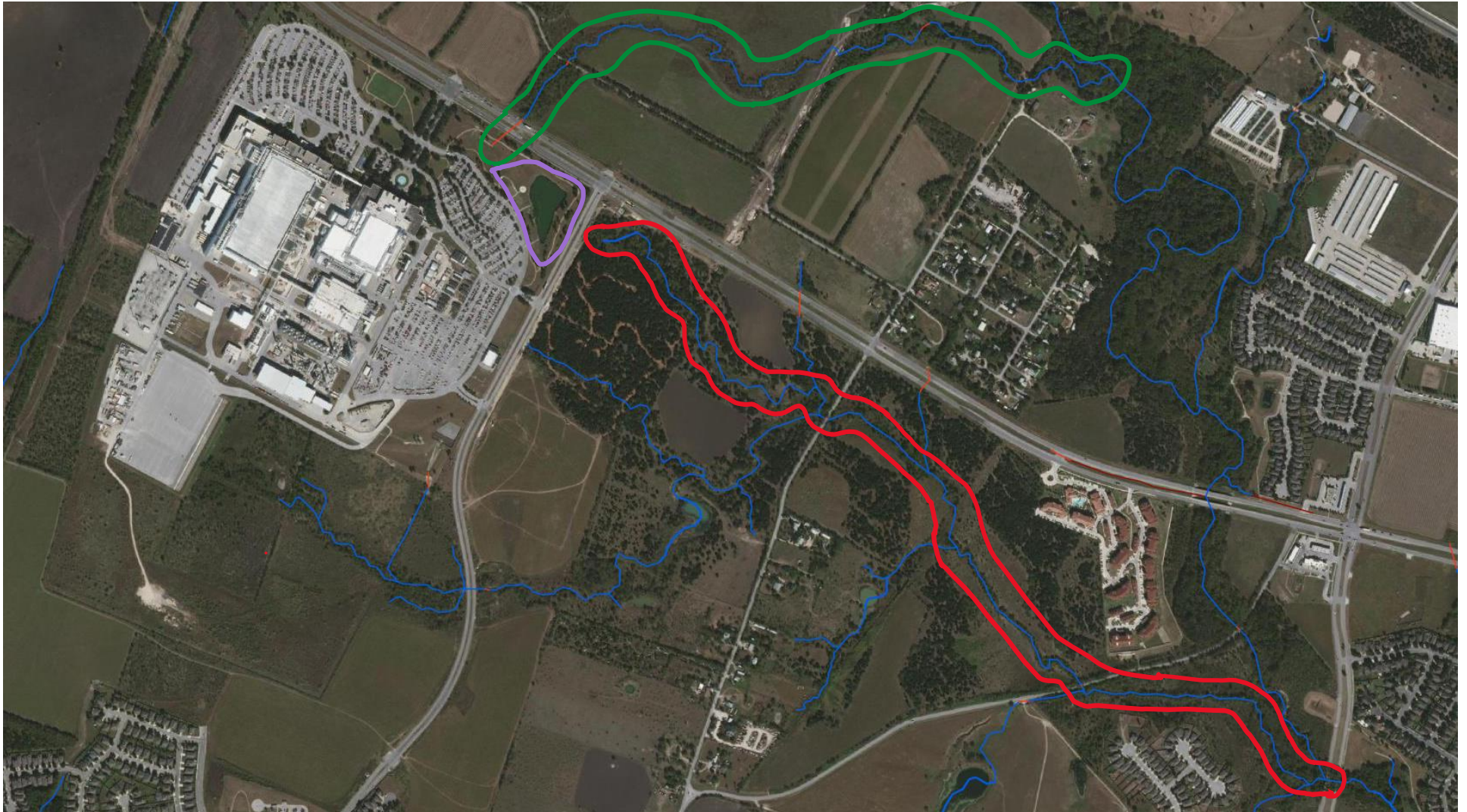
Public access to this area is limited. There are no nearby parks or residential areas, and we did not observe indications of homeless encampments along the tributary. The tributary passes active construction for multi-family residential and commercial development.

Since February 3, 2022, the combination of stormwater and wastewater has been contained again and is being pumped to the sanitary sewer for proper disposal, with approval from Austin Water, at a rate up to 1,000 gallons per minute. Samsung anticipates that all the water will be transferred by February 11, 2022.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Katie Coyne, Environmental Officer; Assistant Director, Watershed Protection Department, at 512-968-5176. TCEQ is the lead agency for this discharge event.

Attachment: Area Map

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
Rey Arellano, Assistant City Manager  
Jorge L. Morales, P.E., CFM, Director



Area map showing locations of: Samsung facility (left side of image), Samsung stormwater quality pond (outlined in purple), unnamed east tributary that received discharges from the initial incident (outlined in red), unnamed north tributary that received recent discharges of stormwater mixed with partially treated industrial wastewater (outlined in green), and the main stem of Harris Branch Creek (right side of image).